

## The Gunmaker Of Moscow

By SYLVANUS COBB, Jr.

### CHAPTER VIII.

THE MARK FALLS FROM THE VILLAIN'S FACE.

It was about two weeks after the events last recorded that Rosalind Valda sat in her own apartment with Zenobia for her companion. It was in the afternoon, and a severe storm was raging without.

"Now, Zenobia," spoke the beautiful maiden, "we have a moment alone, the first since morning. And now tell me about that black monk. What did he say his name was?"

"Vladimir."

"Ah, yes. I have heard his name, and if I mistake not he is a sort of mysterious being."

"He is, my mistress, and I am just as confident that I have seen him before as I am that I have seen you before."

"How? Seen him before?"

"Yes."

"But where?"

"Ah," returned the young girl, with a dubious shake of the head, "there is the mystery. For the life of me I cannot tell. He knew me—he knows everybody—and yet he has not been long in the city if one might judge from his conversation."

"But what did he stop you for? Where was it?" asked Rosalind eagerly.

"It was in the church he stopped me—in our Church of St. Stephen. He was at the altar, and he beckoned to me as I rose to come out. I went to him, and he asked about you."

"About me?"

"Yes, and about Ruric Nevel."

"And what about us?" the maiden asked, blushing.

"He asked me if I thought you loved the young gunmaker. He was so kind and he appeared so anxious to know and then he seemed to take such an interest in Ruric that I could not refuse to answer him."

"But what did you tell him?"

"I told him you did love Ruric. I told him how you had been children together and how you would now give your hand to him sooner than to the proudest noble in the land. He asked me some things about the duke, but I would not tell him. When I must tell of evil if I tell the truth, I will not speak if I can properly avoid it."

"You were right, Zenobia. You were very right about this last part, but you should not have told all you knew concerning Ruric and me."

"I hope I did nothing wrong. Oh, I should be proud to acknowledge my love for such a man."

"Aye, and so I am, my little sprite. I love Ruric with my whole soul and would be proud to give him my hand this day, but that is no reason why you should tell of it."

"Surely, my mistress, I meant no harm," the young girl cried eagerly.

"Hush, Zenobia. I do not blame you; only I would have you careful."

"And I would be careful. But, oh, you could not have resisted him. He drew it from me almost ere I knew it. He put his questions in such a strange manner that I could not speak without telling what he wanted to know. He did not say, 'Does she love Ruric Nevel?' but he took it for granted that such was the case, and then ere I was aware of it he had made me say so. But he surely does not mean you harm, nor does he mean harm to Ruric. He is a good man, I know."

"I wish I could see him," returned Rosalind half to herself.

"You cannot mistake him if you ever do see him, my mistress. He is a strange looking man, and, then, he dresses differently from most of our church officers. He dresses all in black—today it was in black velvet. But his shape is his most striking characteristic. He is the fattest man in Moscow. His belly shakes when he laughs, and his chin seems to sink clear out of sight. He would be a funny man and would make me laugh if he did not puzzle me so."

"And did he ask you about anything else?"

"No; only he asked me if I knew how the duke stood with the emperor, and I told him I thought he stood very well. Then he said he had heard that they had had some dispute concerning the duel between Count Damonoff and Ruric. But I told him I guessed that had resulted in no estrangement, for the duke was as much at court as ever. And after that he told me about the duel, as he was there and saw nearly the whole of the affair."

"And Zenobia went on and told all that the monk related about Ruric's bravery, and Rosalind listened now

attentively and eagerly. It was a theme that pleased her. The attendant saw how gratefully the account came upon the ears of her mistress, and she closed the recital with some opinion of her own wherein Ruric Nevel was held up as a pattern after which all men who wished to win the love of woman should be made.

But before any answer could be made by Rosalind the door of the apartment was opened, and the duke entered. He smiled very kindly as he bowed to his ward, and then, with a wave of his hand, he motioned for Zenobia to withdraw, and after the attendant was gone he took a seat close by his fair charge. The maiden looked up into his face, and though there was no serious look there as yet, still she could plainly see that he had something of more than usual importance on his mind. She shuddered as she gazed upon him, for she could not help it. There was something in the look of the man—a sort of hidden intent, which came out in his tone and glance; a deep meaning, something which he had never spoken, but which was yet manifest—that moved her thus. What it was she could not tell. It was the prompting of that instinct of the human soul which may repel an object while yet the working mind detects no harm.

But she was not to remain in the dark much longer. The evil one was loose, and his bonds of restraint were cast off. He had marked his prey, and the meshes were gathering about it. "Rosalind," the duke said in a tone which he meant should have been easy and frank, but which nevertheless was marked strongly with effort, "there is some talk among the surgeons now that Conrad Damonoff may recover."

"Oh, I am glad of that!" the fair girl uttered earnestly.

"Yes, I suppose so," resumed Olga, eying her sharply. "But you have no particular care for him, I presume?"

"For—for the count?"

"Aye; it was of him I was speaking."

"No, sir. I care only for him as I care for all who need to become better ere they die."

"Aha, yes!" said the duke, biting his lip, for in his own mind he had the frankness to acknowledge that he was about as needy of virtue as was the count. "But," he resumed,

"Rosalind," the nobleman continued, "when I was but 19 years of age, I was married with a girl whom I loved. She lived with me four short, happy years. In that time we were blessed with two children, but they lived not long to cheer us. And then my beautiful wife died, and the world was all dark and drear to me. I thought I should never love again. Time passed on, and you were placed in my charge. When you first came, I loved you, and I wondered if you were to take the place of the children I had lost. But you grew quickly up. Your mind was expanded, and your heart was large. I found that I could not make a child of you, and then I sat down all alone and asked myself what place it was you had assumed in my heart. Can you guess the answer, Rosalind?"

"As a little child," answered the maiden, trembling violently.

"No, no, sweet one! I pondered, and I studied, and I examined myself carefully, and I found that the memory of my departed wife was fast fading away before the rising of another one just as pure and just as holy. Now do you understand?"

"No, no! Oh, no!" the maiden uttered in a frightened whisper.

"Then listen further," continued the nobleman in a low, earnest tone and with a strange fire in his deep blue eyes. "As your charms of both mind and person were gradually developed I came to look upon you with new feelings, or, I should say, with the old feeling more fully developed. I looked around me. I saw my sumptuous palace without a legitimate female head. In my parties I had no companion to assist and guide me, and in my loneliness I had no mate to cheer and enliven me. I wished not that such should be the case. At length my eyes were opened, and I saw plainly the spirit that was moving upon my soul. I looked upon you, and I knew that I had found the woman who was to give me joy once more. Rosalind, I love you truly, fondly, and I would make you my wife. Now you cannot fail to understand me, can you?"

Rosalind gazed up into the face of her guardian, and she was pale as death.

"It was not mean—oh!"

"You are a deep, painful groan, and the fair girl clasped her hands toward the man before her.

"Hold!" he said almost sternly. "I am not trifling now. I am not only serious, but firm in purpose. When you were placed under my charge, your father bade me do as I would, and now I would make you my wife. The Count Damonoff was the first who came for your hand, and had he been a proper man, and had you loved him, I should have interposed no objections, but you did not love him, and that affair is past. Now I lay my claim upon you, and my fortune and title I lay at your feet."

"And what is to become of my estate?" the maiden asked quickly



with a faint smile, "you never loved the man?"

"No, sir," the maiden answered, gazing up into her guardian's face, with an inquisitive look.

"So I thought, so I thought." As Olga thus spoke she smiled again and moved his chair nearer to Rosalind.

"I am well aware," he resumed, "that your affections have not as yet been set upon any one who is capable of making a proper companion for you through all the ups and downs of life."

Rosalind's eyes drooped beneath the steady gaze of the speaker, and her frame trembled. But ere she could make any reply the duke went on:

"My dear Rosalind, I have come now upon a business which I may justly call the most important of my life. I have not approached this subject lightly nor with overzeal, but I have come to it through careful consideration and anxious study."

Here the duke stopped and gazed into Rosalind's face. She met his gaze, and her eyes drooped again. She trembled more than before, and a dim, dreadful fear worked its way to her mind.

"Rosalind," the nobleman continued, "when I was but 19 years of age, I was married with a girl whom I loved. She lived with me four short, happy years. In that time we were blessed with two children, but they lived not long to cheer us. And then my beautiful wife died, and the world was all dark and drear to me. I thought I should never love again. Time passed on, and you were placed in my charge. When you first came, I loved you, and I wondered if you were to take the place of the children I had lost. But you grew quickly up. Your mind was expanded, and your heart was large. I found that I could not make a child of you, and then I sat down all alone and asked myself what place it was you had assumed in my heart. Can you guess the answer, Rosalind?"

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and meaningly, for the thought flashed upon her.

"Why—we'll have the two united," returned the duke, with some hesitation.

"No, no!" Rosalind cried. "You will not do this! Oh, spare me from such a fate!"

"Spare thee, girl—spare thee from becoming the wife of one of the most powerful noblemen in the empire? You must be crazy."

"My guardian," spoke the fair girl, now looking her companion steadily in the face, "you only do this to try me. When you know that such a union would make me miserable forever, when you know it would cast out all the joys of life and extinguish the last hope of peace from my soul, you surely will not press it."

"Rosalind Valda, I have resolved that you shall be my wife. Mind you, this is one of the firm, fixed purposes of my soul, and those who know the Duke of Tula best know that he never gives up a purpose once fixed in his mind. You cannot mistake me now."

Slowly the stern fact dawned upon Rosalind's mind. There had been a lingering hope that he might be only trying her to see if she loved him or if she would willingly become his wife. Awhile she remained with her head bowed and her bosom heaving with the wild emotion thus called up. But at length she looked up and spoke.

"Sir," she said faintly, but with marked decision, "you cannot make me your wife."

"Ah! And why not?"

"Because I will never consent."

"Ah! Say you so?"

"I do, and I mean it."

"Ha, ha, ha! You know little of my power if you think you can thwart me in my purpose. I tell thee, as sure as the God of heaven lives, you shall be my wife."

"No, no! Before heaven I protest against such unholy union. You cannot have my heart, and such a union would be but foul mockery."

"Oho! Now you come to the point. I can't have your heart, eh? Perhaps your heart is given to the gunmaker?"

Rosalind's eyes flashed in an instant. The words of the duke were spoken sneeringly and contemptuously, and they jarred upon the young girl's soul.

"Aye," she quickly uttered, and boldly, too, "I do love Ruric Nevel, and he is worthy of my love."

"Now, my pretty ward," resumed Olga in a tone of peculiar irony, "you have spoken as I hoped you would speak—plainly and to the point, so I can answer just as plainly. Know, then, that Ruric Nevel can never be your husband. He stands charged with a horrid crime, and the emperor only waits to see whether the count recovers or not ere he awards the punishment. The gunmaker is forbidden on pain of death to leave the city. So you may cast him from your thoughts as soon as possible."

"What crime is Ruric accused of?" the maiden asked.

"Of murder."

"In wounding the count?"

"Yes."

"Oh, how can you bring your tongue to such speech? You know the noble youth was not to blame in this affair. He was!"

"Hold, Rosalind. I want no argument on this question. You have heard what I have said, and be assured that I mean it. I had hoped you would receive my proposal with more favor, but I did not enter into the plan until my mind was all made up and the thing all fixed. You will become my wife within one month!"

"I will flee to the emperor," gasped Rosalind.

"You will not leave this palace again until you are the Duchess of Tula!"

"I will never speak the word that is necessary to make me your wife—never! At the altar, if you be by my side, my lips shall be sealed, and no power on earth shall loose them!"

"Do you mean this?" whispered the duke.

"As God lives I do!"

"Then mark me!"—the stout, dark nobleman gazed fixedly into the maiden's face as he spoke, and in his look and tone there was a fiendish expression that could not be mistaken—"I shall do all in my power to make you my lawful wife. If you refuse me, you shall be beaten with the knout in the market place, where all may see the ungrateful girl who refused the heart and hand of the noble Duke of Tula. Aye, and after thou art beaten thou shalt be cast into the streets for dogs to bark at. Dost hear me, Rosalind Valda?"

With one deep, soul-dying moan the poor girl sank down, shivering and pale. The duke caught her as she fell, and, having laid her senseless form back upon the couch, he strode from the apartment.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

Educate Your Bowels With Cascarets. Candy Cathartic, cure constipation forever. No. 26. If C. C. C. fail, druggists refund money.

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These Suits are new and nice goods; such bargains you never had a chance at before. We have a large lot of

## Beds, Mattresses, Springs,

Sideboards, China Closets, Dining Tables, Center Tables, Folding Lounges, Hat Racks, Wardrobes and Desks.

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A rainbow in the eye indicates love in the heart.

The accumulation of money is merely a habit—that's all.

Adversity is the only true balance in which to weigh friends.

No man ever arrived suddenly at the summit of pure cussedness.

A convalescent patient is one who has outwitted his physician.

Women are called weaker sex because they are so easily humbugged by men.

The highest compliment one woman ever pays another is to say she is nice looking.

Many a college graduate renounces a career for the purpose of tackling a steady job.

Occasionally a foolish young man flatters a girl until she gets too stuck up to speak to him.

The woman who marries a man with a large purse and small intellect evidently prefers dollars to sense.

Girls, don't be discouraged. Naomi was 580 years old when she took out herself a husband for better or for worse.—Chicago News.

### Marriage License.

C. B. Notgrass to Miss R. A. Bell.

E. W. Frazer to Miss M. C. Price.

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W. M. Dalton to Miss Ora Bailey.

Jack Morton to Miss Eula Guthrie.

W. M. Hardison to Miss Cora Gilliam.

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### Columbia District.

#### First Round.

Trinity at Cedar Grove Dec. 7, 8.

Pisgah Circuit at Pisgah Dec. 9.

Pulaski at Pulaski Dec. 8, 9.

Bigbyville at Enterprise Dec. 14, 15.

Mt. Pleasant at Mt. Pleasant Dec. 15, 16.

South Columbia at South Columbia Dec. 20, 22.

Columbia at Columbia Dec. 23, 23.

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Barney, C. Martin, Capt E M

Brantford, Mrs. Ella Moses, H W

Dobbins, Rev W A Mullins, Sallie

Embry, Haznah McKissick, A S

Easley, Mrs. Mary Patterson, Mattie

Fleming, Tennie Rhodes, Mrs. L C

Fleming, Emley Stanley, Miss Eva

Frierson, Mary Taylor, Mrs. A B

Gross, Jacob Thompson, Calvin

Hammonds, J Y Williams, Laura

Keppel, Joe C Williams, James

Kittrell, Mrs. Laura

Parties calling for the above letters will please say advertised.

Advertised letters due one cent.

H. F. FARIS, P. M.

### Saloon Voted Out.

A special from Knoxville says: "At the election today to decide whether Greenville was to repeal its charter and go 'dry' or retain its charter and go 'wet,' a majority of 36 votes won it for the former. A total of 320 votes were cast. The day passed off quietly. Party lines were strictly drawn, and it really means that the Republicans have gained a victory, as they were lined up against the saloon."